

## **I. Overview of Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS)**

### ***A. Background***

Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) is the statewide, standards-based assessment. AIMS measures the performance of students, schools and districts on standards in reading, writing and mathematics and is administered to students in grades 3, 5, 8 and high school. The central components of standards-based education include a curriculum aligned to the Standards, instructional materials aligned to the Standards and the evaluation of teachers to ensure that the Standards are integrated into instructional practices. These components are the organizational foundation for successful student achievement of the skills and knowledge of the Standards.

The primary purposes of AIMS are

- to measure the performance of individual students, schools, and districts based on Arizona's standards
- to increase the academic achievement of every student
- to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate what they know and are able to do
- to insure each child benefits from instructional changes and educational reforms that are implemented in response to information based on assessment results

## **B. 2003 AIMS Schedule**

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) dictates that all students must be assessed against age appropriate grade level standards. As a result, in 2003 students will be tested in the grades and subjects shown in Table 1. Students with disabilities must take assessments in the same subject as those taken by their non-disabled peers at the same grades or in ungraded classes at ages 9, 11, 14, 16, 17 and 18.

Table 1. Grades and Subjects Tested by AIMS in 2003

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Ungraded (Age)</b>	<b>Subject</b>
3	Age 9	Reading/Mathematics/Writing
5	Age 11	Reading/Mathematics/Writing
8	Age 14	Reading/Mathematics/Writing
10	Age 16	Reading/Mathematics/Writing
11	Age 17	Reading/Mathematics/Writing
12	Age 18	Reading/Mathematics/Writing

## **II. Participation of Students with Disabilities in AIMS**

### **A. Definition of a Student with a Disability**

For purposes of AIMS, a student with a disability has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or has a 504 Plan under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

### **B. Who Must Participate in AIMS**

Arizona's Law (ARS 15-741 (A), (2); ARS 15-743 F; also IDEA 300.138 (b) (1) (2) as well as No Child Left Behind (NCLB)) mandates that all students with disabilities who are educated with Arizona's public funds participate in AIMS, including

- students enrolled in traditional public schools
- students enrolled in public charter schools
- students enrolled in educational collaboratives
- students enrolled in approved private special education schools within and outside Arizona
- students receiving educational services in institutional settings, including state supported institutions and secure care facilities.

Each student is permitted to take AIMS only for a grade level matched to the student's chronological age; for example administering a grade 3 test to a student in grade 3 only. The two exceptions to this policy are as follows:

- 1) Students in grades 11 and 12 (or beyond) who have not yet achieved "Meets the Standard," or "Exceeds the Standard" on any subtest of AIMS and are retaking AIMS
- 2) Students eligible to take AIMS-A

### **C. Determining How Students with Disabilities Will Participate in AIMS**

During its annual meeting, the student's IEP or 504 Team will determine how the individual student will participate in AIMS in each subject area for the assessment scheduled for the upcoming school year. This information must be documented in the students' IEP. Guidelines to assist teams in making assessment participation decisions for individual students appear on pages 5-6.

#### **D. AIMS Participation Guidelines**

These guidelines are provided to assist IEP and 504 Teams through the process of deciding how each student with a disability will participate in AIMS. A separate decision must be made in each subject scheduled for testing. The student's team should begin by asking the following questions:

- Can the student take AIMS under standardized conditions?
- Can the student take AIMS with accommodations? If so, which accommodations are necessary and appropriate for the student?
- Does the student require an alternate assessment? (Note. Alternate assessment is intended for a very small number of students with significant cognitive disabilities who are unable to take AIMS under standardized conditions. Arizona's alternate assessment is Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards – Alternate (AIMS-A). This assessment contains an AIMS-A checklist, a Parent Questionnaire and activity based assessment component, made up of reading, writing, listening and speaking, and mathematics skills infused into functional activities. For a copy of the alternate assessment forms please refer to our website at [www.ade.az.gov/state\\_tests\\_acad\\_stds.asp](http://www.ade.az.gov/state_tests_acad_stds.asp)

- Note that students who have an IEP may be considered for standard and non-standard accommodations as well as alternate assessment. Students with a 504 Plan may only be considered for standard accommodations, unless the State Board of Education decides otherwise. Given that non-standard accommodations involve substantial changes in what a student is expected to learn and to demonstrate, students considered for this accommodation must receive at least part of their instruction in special education and must have an IEP.

Characteristic of Student's Instructional Program and Local Assessment	Recommended Participation in AIMS
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>OPTION 1</u></b></p> <p><b><u>If the student is:</u></b></p> <p>a) Working on learning standards at or near grade-level expectations; and is;</p> <p>b) Generally able to take a paper-and-pencil test.</p>	<p><b><u>Then:</u></b></p> <p>The student should take <b>AIMS</b>, under routine conditions (without any accommodations).</p> <p><i>Available for children with an IEP or a 504 plan.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>OPTION 2</u></b></p> <p><b><u>If the student is:</u></b></p> <p>a) Working on learning standards that have been modified and are below grade-level expectations due to the nature of the student's disability(ies); and is;</p> <p>b) Generally able to take a paper-and-pencil test under routine conditions, or with one or more test accommodations</p>	<p><b><u>Then:</u></b></p> <p>The student should take <b>AIMS</b>, either under routine conditions or with <u>standard accommodation(s)</u> that are consistent with the instructional accommodation(s) used in the student's educational program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Available for children with an IEP or a 504 plan.</i></li> </ul>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>OPTION 3</u></b></p> <p><b><u>If the student is:</u></b></p> <p>a) Working on learning standards at, near, or below grade-level expectations and is</p> <p>b) Generally able to take a paper-and-pencil test under routine conditions, or with one or more test accommodation(s); but is</p> <p>c) Presented with unique and significant challenges in demonstrating his/her knowledge and skills on a test of this format and duration</p>	<p><b><u>Then:</u></b> The student should take <b>AIMS</b> either under routine conditions or with <u>standard or non-standard accommodation(s)</u> that are consistent with the instructional accommodation(s) used in the student's educational program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Available <u>only</u> for children with an IEP or with permission from the State Board of Education.</i></li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>OPTION 4</u></b></p> <p><b><u>If the student is:</u></b></p> <p>a) Working on learning standards (functional and readiness levels of the Arizona Academic Standards) that have been substantially modified due to the nature and severity of the student's disability; and</p> <p>b) Receiving intensive, individualized instruction necessary for the student to acquire and generalize knowledge, and/or demonstrate skills; and is</p> <p>c) Generally unable to demonstrate knowledge on a paper-and-pencil test, even with accommodations</p>	<p><b><u>Then:</u></b> The student should take <b>AIMS-A</b> in this subject.</p> <p>Note. Participation is alternate assessment is intended for a very small number of students with significant cognitive disabilities.</p> <p>(Examples of unique circumstances in which a student in this category may require an alternate assessment are provided on page 7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Available <u>only</u> for children with an IEP or with permission from the State Board of Education.</i></li> </ul>

When making decisions about student participation in testing it is important to remember:

- 1) It is necessary to state clearly what all students are to know and be able to do before determining whether there is a need for a specific accommodation (standard or non-standard).
- 2) It is important to consider the specific accommodations (standard and non-standard) for both instruction and assessment. When students need accommodations in how they learn, they are likely to need accommodations in how they are assessed. Conversely, if students do not need accommodations in how they learn, they will not need accommodations in how they are assessed.
- 3) It is important to consider the type of accommodation (standard or non-standard) that is used for students, particularly as they gain more skills.

#### **E. Unique Circumstances in Which a Student May be Considered for an Alternate Assessment**

The nature and complexity of a student's disability may present significant barriers or challenges to standardized testing, even when the student is working on learning standards at or near grade level expectations. In these and similar circumstances, only the IEP team may determine that it is necessary for the student to take the alternate assessment in one or more subjects. Parents should always participate in the decision-making processes. Students may be considered for the alternate assessment in any or all content areas.

The alternate assessment measures a student's progress on the Functional and Readiness levels of the Arizona Academic Standards. The decision making process for eligibility should depend upon a student's instructional levels rather than his/her category of disability. If an IEP team determines that a student cannot participate in AIMS in a meaningful way using standard and/or non-standard accommodations and if the student is being instructed at the Functional and Readiness levels of the Arizona Academic Standards, the IEP team should consider eligibility for the alternate assessment.

The following examples are intended to expand the team's understanding of the appropriate use of alternate assessments and are not meant to be exhaustive.

- A student who, as a consequence of either severe emotional impairments or pervasive developmental or other disability(ies) is unable to maintain sufficient concentration to participate in standard testing, even with adaptations
- A student with multiple physical disabilities, severe health-related disabilities, severe cerebral palsy or other disability for whom the demands of a prolonged test administration would present a significant challenge.
- A student with a significant motor, communication, or other disability who would require more time than is reasonable or available for testing, even with the allowance of extended time.

### **III. AIMS Standard Accommodations and Non-Standard Accommodations**

#### **A. Student Eligible for Test Accommodations**

Students with disabilities who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) can be considered for standard and non-standard accommodations. Students with a 504 plan may be considered only for standard accommodations.

#### **B. Definition and Purpose of Standard Accommodations and Non-Standard Accommodations**

**Standard accommodations** are provisions made in how a student accesses and demonstrates learning. These do not substantially change the instructional level, the content or the performance criteria. The changes are made in order to provide a student equal access to learning and equal opportunity to demonstrate what is known. Standard accommodations are changes in the routine conditions under which students take AIMS, and involve changes in:

- **Timing or scheduling of the test;** for example, administration of the test in short intervals or at a time of day that takes into account student's medical needs.
- **Test setting;** for example, administration of the test individually or in a small group setting, under special lighting or special furniture.
- **Test presentation;** for example, test question presented in large print or Braille, repeated directions or explanation of directions.



- **How the student responds to test questions**; for example, the student dictates his or her responses to the test administrator, tape records, scribes or points to answer.

A list of standard accommodations is presented in the Table below.

<i>Accommodations</i>
<b>I. Changes in timing or scheduling of the test</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Extended testing time (same day).</li> <li>2. More breaks.</li> <li>3. Extended sessions over multiple days.</li> </ol>
<b>II. Changes in Test Setting</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Administering the test in study carrel.</li> <li>2. Administering the test in separate room.</li> <li>3. Administering the test in small groups.</li> <li>4. Administering the test with students seated at the front or in a specified area of the room (preferential seating).</li> <li>5. Administering the test under special lightning.</li> <li>6. Administering the test in a room with special furniture.</li> <li>7. <i>Administering test with student wearing noise buffers (after directions have been give using routine administration procedures).</i></li> </ol>
<b>III. Changes in Test Presentation</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Test administrator reads and/or clarifies general administration instructions and test items, except on the reading portion of the test.</li> <li>2. Use of assistive devices, normally provided during instruction, to read and/or clarify general administration instructions and test items, except on the reading portion of the test.</li> <li>3. Test administrator repeats directions.</li> <li>4. Administer test with test administrator familiar to the student.</li> <li>5. Administer large-print edition of the test.</li> <li>6. Administer Braille edition of the test.</li> <li>7. <i>Administer test using magnifying equipment or enlargement devices</i></li> <li>8. <i>Allow student to use a place marker.</i></li> <li>9. <i>Test administrator assists the student in tracking and/or sequencing of test items (e.g. moving from one test question to the next; or redirecting the student's attention to the test).</i></li> <li>10. <i>Administering the test using the student's amplification equipment</i></li> <li>11. <i>Test administrator uses sign language to interpret portion of the math or writing test, but not the reading test.</i></li> </ol>
<b>IV. Changes in How the Student Responds to Test Questions</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Answers dictated to a scribe either orally, by pointing or signing the answer. Scribe may not alter student responses in any way, and must record word for word exactly what the student has dictated into the student's answer booklet. Scribes should request clarification from the student regarding the use of punctuation, capitalization, and the spelling of key words, and must allow the student to review and edit</li> </ol>

<p>what the scribe has written. Applies to the reading and math portion of the test only, while the writing portion of the test is exempt.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Answers recorded using audiotape to be later transcribed into the student's answer booklet.</li> <li>Answers recorded or typed by the student using assistive technology (e.g. word processor, electronic speech to text conversion).</li> <li>One-to-one administration.</li> <li>Answers recorded by the student directly in the student test booklet instead of the answer booklet, and copied word-for-word into the answer booklet by the test administrator.</li> <li><i>Use of template or graphic organizer to generate an open response. The student (or test administrator) must transcribe the final draft into the student's answer booklet.</i></li> <li><i>Test administrator monitors correct placement of student responses in the student's answer booklet.</i></li> </ol>
<b>V. Other Accommodations</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audio tape administration of assessment, exempting the reading portion of the test.</li> <li>Use of thesaurus.</li> <li>Spelling and grammar checking software and devices.</li> </ol>

Other standard accommodations selected by the IEP or 504 team.

Note: The principal or designee should consult with the Department when accommodations not on the above list are being considered for a student in order to determine whether the accommodation will be considered standard or non-standard. Please contact Paul Young either by email at [pyoung@ade.state.az.us](mailto:pyoung@ade.state.az.us) or phone (602) 542-5450 for more information.

**Non-standard accommodations** reflect changes in the test administration that affect standardization and, thus, the comparability of scores and may also involve substantial changes in what a student is expected to learn and to demonstrate. Such changes are made to provide a student with meaningful and productive learning experiences, environments, and assessments based on individual needs and abilities. IEP Teams should exercise caution in considering whether a student requires a non-standard accommodation in order to access the test.

Non-standard accommodations may not

- simplify, paraphrase, explain, or eliminate any test item, prompt, or multiple-choice option
- provide verbal or other clues or suggestions that hint at or give away the correct response to the student

Only the student's IEP Team may decide that a student receive a non-standard accommodation(s). If a non-standard accommodation is administered, parents will be notified and the provided accommodation explained. A list of non-standard accommodations and a description of the circumstances in which they should be considered appears in the table below. **The table of non-standard accommodations will be inserted here.**

IEP Teams are instructed to identify which accommodations, if any, are necessary in order for the student to take AIMS. Test accommodations (standard and non-standard) must be generally consistent with those used during routine classroom instruction. The right to receive accommodations (standard or non-standard) on statewide tests is guaranteed to a child with a disability under the Individuals with Disability Education Act, IDEA (1997).

### **C. Test Accommodation Policy**

Students with disabilities must be provided test **accommodations** when their IEP's (standard and non-standard) or 504 teams (standard accommodations only) have determined their necessity on a particular test. Department policy allows the use of both "standard" and "non-standard" accommodations on AIMS under the conditions outlined on the following pages. While "standard" accommodations can be considered for all students with disabilities, "non-standard" accommodations can only be considered for students with an IEP.

Non-standard accommodations should only be provided to students with disabilities as stated in the IEP when they meet both of the following criteria:

- 1) This accommodation is already provided during routine instruction and assessment in this subject area (both before and after the test is administered)
- 2) No other means of access allows the student to meaningfully participate in AIMS.

### **D. Reporting Results of AIMS Taken with Standard and Non-Standard Accommodations**

Scores of AIMS, taken with either standard or non-standard accommodations, will be included in the results of students who took these tests under standard conditions, at the school, district and state level.

For reporting purposes, the Department will maintain a record of the number of students in each school and district taking AIMS tests with non-standard accommodations. Given that test scores with non-standard accommodations can not be interpreted in the same way, guidance for appropriate interpretation will be provided. **The Department is obligated to closely monitor schools and districts to ensure the proper use of non-standard accommodations and will provide technical assistance to those schools requiring assistance. The goal of the Department will be to work with those schools having high numbers of non-standard accommodations to determine why this is occurring and how best to remedy the situation.**

### **E. Non-Standard Accommodations for AIMS**

Students may use one or more of the following non-standard accommodations when they are consistent with non-standard accommodations provided to the student during routine instruction and assessment; and when they are determined by the student's IEP Team to be absolutely necessary in order for the student to meaningfully participate in AIMS:

#### Reading Test:

1. Reading aloud the reading portions of the test to a student. This includes the use of any assistive devices routinely used during instruction. Readers must read test items/questions and reading passages to the student word for word exactly as written. Readers may not clarify, elaborate, or provide assistance to the student regarding the meaning of words, intent of test questions, or response to test items/questions.
2. Interpreting through Sign Language system the reading portion of AIMS to a student with disabilities that requires this form of communication or who is instructed in this way. This also includes any assistive devices used for the student during regular instruction. Interpreters must interpret test items and prompts without clarifying, elaborating, or providing assistance to the student regarding the meaning of words, intent of test questions, or responses to test items. It should be noted that this non-standard accommodation does not include interpretation of language and should not be used as such.

**Note:** Non-standard accommodations #1 and #2 should be considered when both of the following conditions apply:

- The student has a specific impairment that greatly limits or prevents her or his ability to decode text, even after varied and repeated attempts to teach the student to do so
- and
- The student has access to printed materials only through a reader or sign-language interpreter or another electronic format for routine instruction, or is provided with text on audiotape.

### Writing Test:

3. Allowing a student to dictate to a scribe, record on audiotape (for transcription by a test administrator), or use an electronic “speech –to-text” conversion device for the writing portion of AIMS. When the student dictates to a scribe, the scribe may not edit or alter student responses in any way, and must record word-for-word exactly what the student has dictated. Scribes should request clarification from the student regarding the use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling, and must allow the student to review and edit what the scribe has written. Students using Sign Language Systems, due to inherent difficulties in this approach, will not be able to dictate to a scribe. Given that translation of language is not allowed, this non-standard accommodation cannot be provided to students using Sign Language Systems.

**Note:** Use of non-standard accommodation #3 should be considered when **either** of the following conditions applies:

- The student dictates virtually all written composition to a scribe; or records these on audiotapes for transcription by an adult; or routinely uses an electronic “speech to text” conversion device to generate written compositions during routine instruction.

or

- The student does not have sufficient manual dexterity at the time of testing to produce legible written work.

4. Allowing a student to use a spell- or grammar-checking device when using a word processor for the writing portion of AIMS; or word prediction software provided that “predict-ahead” and “predict-online” functions are turned off.

**Note:** Use of non-standard accommodation #4 should be considered when **both** of the following conditions apply:

- The student has a specific impairment that greatly limits or prevents her or his ability to spell, even after varied and repeated attempts to teach the student to do so,

and

- The student can produce written work only through use of a spell-or grammar- checking device or word prediction software which the student uses during routine instruction.

Math Test:

5. Allowing a student to use a calculator, number chart, arithmetic table, manipulatives, or abacus on the Mathematics portion of AIMS where, under standard conditions, calculators are not allowed.

**Note:** Use of non-standard accommodation #5 should be considered when **both** of the following conditions apply:

- The student has a specific impairment that greatly limits or prevents her or his ability to calculate mathematically, even after varied and repeated attempts to teach the student to do so

and

- The student has access to mathematical calculations only through the use of a calculator, number chart, arithmetic table, manipulatives, or abacus, which the student uses for routine instruction.

**F. Other Accommodations Selected by the IEP Team**

**Note:** The above list of accommodations should serve as a list of examples and is in no way exhaustive. The principal or designee should consult with the Department when accommodations not on the above list are being considered for a student in order to determine whether the accommodation will be considered standard or non-standard. Please contact Paul Young either by email at [pyoung@ade.state.az.us](mailto:pyoung@ade.state.az.us) or phone (602) 542-5450 for more information.

#### **IV. Alternate Assessment Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards – Alternate (AIMS-A)**

##### **A. Overview**

AIMS-A is an assessment designed to measure student progress in learning the Functional and Readiness levels of the Arizona Academic Standards in the content areas of reading, writing, listening/speaking, and mathematics. This assessment contains an AIMS –A checklist, a Parent Questionnaire and activity based assessment component, made up of reading, writing, listening and speaking, and mathematics skills infused into functional activities. It employs an analysis of the tasks involved in student's performance of the activities within the following four domains: school/vocational, domestic living, recreation/leisure and community. The purpose of including performance-based activities in AIMS-A is to assess how a student applies Functional level skills in everyday activities. Finally, a portfolio portion of the AIMS-A assessment can be used to support any of the components of the assessment. Evidence of student achievement on selected skills may be demonstrated and collected in a variety of formats. Portfolio collections may include graphs of performance, student work samples, work products, audiotapes, videotapes as well as anecdotal records of student performance. While the creation of a portfolio or the maintenance of student work products is important for instructional decisions and communication with parents, it is optional for Arizona's alternate assessment.

Students designated to participate in AIMS-A by their IEP teams must participate in this assessment at every grade (age) and in each subject for which AIMS is required. A student may be eligible to participate in AIMS-A for all content areas, or may be eligible to participate in some content areas on AIMS-A while in others-at different grade levels assessed by AIMS.

For further information on the AIMS-A, please go to the Department's alternate assessment web page for an online copy of the Alternate Assessment manual at [www.ade.az.gov/standards/aims](http://www.ade.az.gov/standards/aims).

The Department will monitor the use of alternate assessments statewide to ensure that they are being used appropriately and that decisions regarding participation in this assessment are made in accordance with the law.



## **B. Participation Guidelines**

AIMS-A is intended for a very small number of students with significant cognitive disabilities who, due to the nature and complexity of their disabilities, are unable to participate in standard paper-and-pencil assessments, even with adaptations. IEP Teams must determine annually which students will take alternate assessments in each subject based on their consideration of participation guidelines on pages 5-6.

## **C. Schedule for Conducting Annual Alternative Assessments**

Students designated by their IEP Team for AIMS-A must be assessed in the same subjects for which their grade-level peers are scheduled to take AIMS. Students with disabilities in ungraded programs who are designated for alternate assessments must take these assessments in the same subjects as those taken by their non-disabled peers at the same grades or if in ungraded classes at ages 9, 11, 14, 16, 17 and 18.

## **D. Scoring and Reporting Results of Alternate Assessment**

AIMS-A scores are reported to the Department through the Student Score Summary. Results will be reported to parents, schools, and districts and included with standard test scores at the school and district levels. Scores on the AIMS-A checklist, Parent questionnaire and performance assessment are scored by using the analytic scoring tool. This scoring tool is used to assess each of the state standards and allows student ability to be assessed in small increments of progress.

# **V. Planning and Preparation for AIMS Testing**

## **A. Preparing Students with Disabilities for AIMS**

Since AIMS tests are based on Arizona's Academic standards, every student with a disability must be engaged in an instructional program that

- Is based on Arizona's academic standards
- Uses varied approaches to instruction
- Includes a range of opportunities that enables the student to demonstrate his or her knowledge and skills

- Provides necessary and appropriate program supports and instructional accommodations to guarantee access by the student to the general curriculum.

Educators should analyze what is being taught in their schools and classrooms, and implement an instructional program that enables all students to acquire the content knowledge and skills outlined in Arizona's Academic Standards.

## **B. Parent's Role**

Parents and guardians of students with disabilities play a critical role in preparing their child(ren) for AIMS. Some suggestions follow:

- Meet regularly with your child's teacher(s) to discuss how you can support your child's education at home.
- Inquire about the use of appropriate AIMS accommodations at IEP Team meetings.
- Review class assignments and make sure that adequate time is set aside for homework
- Review AIMS test questions with your son or daughter. Released test items can be found on the Departments website at:  
<http://www.ade.az.gov/standards/aims/>
- Ask whether the school offers an after-school and/or summer program that would benefit your child
- Become familiar with Arizona's Academic Standards